



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Seattle District

30 Day Notice of Availability of Draft Environmental Assessment & Clean Water Act Public Notice

Environmental & Cultural Resources Branch
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Public Notice Date: 17 July 2014
Expiration Date: 18 August 2014
Reference: EN-ER 14-02

Project Name: Chief Joseph Bank Stabilization Project

Interested parties are hereby notified that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District (USACE) has prepared, pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act, a draft environmental assessment (EA) to address the potential environmental impacts associated with a bank stabilization project at Rufus Woods Lake upstream of Chief Joseph Dam in Okanogan County, Washington. In addition to the draft EA, USACE has prepared a Clean Water Act Section 404(b)(1) Evaluation. The purpose of this Public Notice is to solicit comments from interested persons, groups, or agencies.

AUTHORITY

Chief Joseph Dam was authorized as "Foster Creek Dam and Powerhouse" by the River and Harbor Act of 24 July 1946. The River and Harbor Act of 30 June 1948 redesignated the project as "Chief Joseph Dam" in honor of the Nez Perce chief who lived his last years on the Colville Indian Reservation and is buried there. The reservoir on the Columbia River created by Chief Joseph Dam was designated Rufus Woods Lake by Public Law 469, 82d Congress, 2d session, 1952. Hydropower is the authorized purpose of the Chief Joseph Dam.

BACKGROUND

The underlying need for action is to protect a sensitive resource embedded in the bank that is currently experiencing incremental losses and is at risk of catastrophic loss. The site is at risk as a result of releases from Grand Coulee Dam, pool fluctuations at Chief Joseph Dam, or flooding.

The site has experienced significant erosive damage and sloughing of material that has left a fairly high scarp (up to 15 ft high) along much of the project footprint. Based upon observations made during field visits, and discussions with project stakeholders and reservoir operators, the damage has been a result of eddy flows along the face of the riverbank during high spring runoff flows as well as erosive damages caused by mainstem channel flow during high water events. Fluctuations in the reservoir level have also likely contributed to sloughing of material on the face of the project area.

PROPOSED ACTION

The project consists of the design and construction of slope stability measures and erosion protection on a section of the Rufus Woods Lake shoreline. The project site is located in Okanogan County on the right bank (looking downstream) of the Columbia River, near Coulee Dam, WA. The site borders private and Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation land.

No cuts or grading into the existing slope can occur due to the sensitive nature of the project site, so all changes in embankment geometry will be done by placing additional material. A layer of embankment fill material would be placed directly on the existing slope as a filter and to provide a 2H:1V slope for riprap placement along approximately 675 feet. Top soil would be added above the riprap to provide for native plantings and seeding above ordinary high water (OHW). Access to the site is expected to occur by barge, which would be launched from a spit, a short distance upstream from the site. In addition, the spit would be used as a staging area. The spit is owned by the Bureau of Reclamation. Land access, such as via a temporary road, is not an option due to potential disturbance to sensitive resources.

Construction would begin as soon as fall of 2014 and would be done with minimal disturbance to the land area on top of the bank. This project is estimated to require placement of 2,900 cubic yard (cy) of Class II riprap, 1,300 cy of 3 inch minus rock for the embankment material, 550 cy of topsoil, and approximately 1000 native shrub plantings. Rock would be delivered to the staging area at the spit by truck. At the spit, a temporary staging platform would be constructed of riprap (approximately 240 cy) for the barge to dock and reload with material. The platform would be approximately 40 ft wide by 20 ft long with approximately 0.04 acre of riprap below OHW. A temporary construction access road would be built from the existing road along the spit to the staging platform. From the staging platform, material would be stockpiled onto the barge. The barge would then maneuver to the project site. At the site, the material would be placed by excavator from the barge. Native shrubs such as mountain alder (*Alnus incana*), red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea* L.), serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), Nebraska sedge (*Carex nebrascensis*), and coyote willow (*Salix exigua*) would be planted on the bank stabilization structure. The construction phase is estimated to be approximately four to six weeks in duration. The acreage of disturbance below OHW would be approximately 0.60 acres.

ANTICIPATED IMPACTS

Impacts from the project are expected to include minor construction related effects on water quality, vegetation, fish and wildlife, and noise. These impacts to water quality, vegetation, fish and wildlife, and noise would generally be highly localized and short in duration. In addition, approximately 0.60 acres of lake bed would be covered by riprap. USACE would use best management practices (BMPs) to minimize potential adverse effects to aquatic and terrestrial resources. Impact reduction measures will take the form of on-site biological and archeological monitoring during construction, plantings of native vegetation, long-term protection of on-shore habitats, and the implementation of BMPs.

The work associated with the preferred alternative will occur below OHW and will result in a discharge of fill material into waters of the United States and therefore does require a Section 401 water quality certification and a 404(b)(1) evaluation. USACE has requested a 401 certification from Environmental Protection Agency. A 404(b)(1) evaluation was prepared for this project. USACE has determined the proposed action would not likely have an adverse effect on bull trout. Consultation pursuant to Section 7 of Endangered Species Act has been initiated.

EVALUATION

USACE has made a preliminary determination that the environmental impacts of the proposal can be adequately evaluated under the National Environmental Policy Act through preparation of an environmental assessment (EA). USACE has made a preliminary determination that this project, with the incorporation and satisfactory execution of mitigation measures, will not result in significant adverse environmental impacts.

PUBLIC REVIEW PROCESS

The decision on whether to conduct the project will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit, which reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal, must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors which may be relevant to the proposal will be considered; among these are: conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, flood plain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, consideration of property ownership and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people.

Any person who has an interest that may be affected by this disposal of fill or dredged material may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing to the District Engineer within the comment period of this notice, and must clearly set forth the following: the interest that may be affected, the manner in which the interest may be affected by this activity, and the particular reason for holding a public hearing regarding this activity.

USACE invites submission of factual comment on the environmental impact of the proposal. Comments will also be considered in determining whether it would be in the best public interest to proceed with the proposed project. USACE will consider all submissions received before the expiration date of this notice. The nature or scope of the proposal may be changed upon consideration of the comments received. USACE will initiate an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and afford all the appropriate public participation opportunities attendant to an EIS, if significant effects on the quality of the human environment are identified and cannot be mitigated.

Submit comments to the address posted at the top of this notice or to hannah.f.hadley@usace.army.mil no later than *18 August 2014* to ensure consideration. Requests for additional information should be directed to Hannah Hadley, at 206-764-6950 or the above e-mail address. Copies of the draft EA are also available by request.